

HOWARD K. SMITH

News and Comment

Sunday, September 30, 1962

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"What Should We Do About Cuba"?

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Good evening. An analysis of recent events in Cuba in a moment...first, here's the latest in the Mississippi crisis.

Though President Kennedy tonight urged that the books be closed on the Mississippi crisis, Federal Marshals had to use tear gas to disperse crowds of rioting students at the University of Mississippi.

The demonstrations were triggered by the arrival of 29-year old James Meredith on the campus...accompanied by hundreds of U.S. Marshals to guarantee his safety.

He is spending the night in a University apartment but officials declined to register him on the Sabbath.

Presumably he'll be enrolled tomorrow becoming the first Negro ever to register as a regular student at the University.

Meredith and Mississippi were the main subject tonight of a nation-wide television address by President Kennedy. Here's part of what he had to say.

Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett...who has sworn to go to jail rather than see a Negro register at the University...indirectly admitted defeat tonight.

He issued a statement from the Governor's mansion at Jackson saying, in his words, "I know that we are now completely surrounded by armed forces and that we are physically overpowered." He urged all Mississippians and ordered all state officers to preserve the peace and avoid violence.

The maneuver that put Meredith on the University campus with a minimum of uproar, started earlier today when some 400 Marshals left Memphis, Tennessee by plane and car for Oxford.

Once there, truckloads of Marshals suddenly appeared at a back gate to the campus...swept past the state police guards and quickly surrounded the administration building. Meredith followed a short time later.

The Mississippi crisis was the most important story this week...with the Cuban crisis shaping up as the most important for next week.

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It'll start with the OAS meeting on the problem in Washington on Tuesday.

An analysis on the Cuban situation after this message from Nationwide Insurance.

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This month, Cuba has displaced Berlin and South Viet Nam and all our other problems as America's Number One international crisis. Since the Cuban economy almost disintegrated last summer and the Soviets took over direct domination, the island has graduated from a nuisance to a menace.

The keystone of U.S. foreign policy was a short while ago the containment of a distant aggressive Communist Russia.

Now with bases being built in Cuba where offensive weapons can quickly be mounted to cover the U.S. and the Panama Canal, with the campaigns to subvert other Caribbean countries from Cuba intensifying, America finds herself in peril of being outflanked by Russia right on our own shores.

This is an attempt to analyze what has happened and what might be done about it. I suggest that the first thing we need to do in order to think and act effectively is to question two strongly fixed American attitudes--one held by many conservatives and one held by some liberals.

The Conservative view that needs to be re-examined is that what Castro did wrong was to overturn the social order including the confiscation of American industrial properties. It holds that our basic policy should be to associate only with those Conservative Cubans who would restore the situation before Castro, though perhaps with some superficial and respectable changes. This view, which is reputed to be strong in our Central Intelligence Agency, is a hangover from the time when America was an imperialist country and dominated our southern neighbors. Edwin Tetlow, correspondent for the London Daily Telegraph has been to Cuba ten times. He believes Castro has been a failure in all respects except this one:

MR. TELLOW: The Castro Revolution was intended in the first place to emancipate Cuba, and I think it's probably done that. I do not think that Cuba will ever be the same again. We knew her before the wars as a tourist playground and a quite docile market--part of a system--and I do not think even, whatever happens now--suppose it does return to the Caribbean fold, and suppose this Soviet menace is irradiated, I think the United States might very well understand that she will probably have to give Cuba a really advantageous "New Deal."

MR. SMITH: To be effective in Cuba, America may have to accept, and indeed support, revolutionaries and a revolutionary settlement in Cuba.

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Now, the attitude of some Liberals which hinders effective policy is the abhorrence of using force. It is basically a pacifist policy--the kind of attitude that encouraged Hitler to all his early aggressions, and thereby made World War II and its terrible cost inevitable. This attitude forgets that there are worse things than death and that one thing that is worse is walking the earth in intimidation and fear.

Khrushchev said the other day, Americans won't fight, they are too liberal to be effective in Cuba. We are probably going to have to disabuse him of that view.

Now, let's apply that to what has happened in Cuba.

Castro came to power January 1, 1959...just three and three-quarters years ago. His amazingly easy triumph over the much bigger and stronger Batista army...the wild enthusiasms that met him on his long drive to Havana...showed this was not a usual Sugar Cane Republic Putsch. People wanted a break with the past and expected him to bring it.

However, within months, Castro began breaking instead with his promised principles and with his supporters from the mountains. He abandoned promises of free elections within a year...of civil freedoms for Cuba. His program to give land to the peasants was changed to a plan to create tyrannical state-owned farms. He began forcing Communists into key jobs.

Six months after victory, the chief of his air force, Major Diaz Lanz fled to the U.S., saying Castro was turning Cuba over to the Communists.

Seven months after victory President Urrutia of Cuba, chosen by Castro, made the same protest in a speech, and was forced out of office by Castro. In little over a year, the entire original Castro cabinet had fled or was in jail.

Apologists for Castro say he was forced into Russia's hands by American hostility. The main act supposed to do this was President Eisenhower's decision to cut the quota of sugar Cuba might sell in the U.S. But the fact is, eight months before President Eisenhower acted, Castro sent Communist Che Guevara to Moscow to lay lines to Russia. When Guevara got back, Castro made him dictator of Cuba's economy. Four months before Eisenhower's action, Soviet boss Mikoyan returned the visit, signing a treaty in Havana tying Cuban economy to Russia.

When Castro had been in power a little over two years, in April of 1961, the U. S. moved against the newest Soviet satellite ...in one of the most dismal acts of foreign policy ever committed --the Bay of Pigs invasion. The invasion of Cuba by anti-Castro refugees was turned into calamity by those two basic attitudes we mentioned awhile ago.

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The Central Intelligence Agency was afflicted by the Conservative view. It leaned towards Cubans who might restore the situation before Castro. The Cuban underground of revolutionaries was not even alerted that an invasion was coming. So the invaders did not get the support within Cuba they had counted on.

President Kennedy on the other hand displayed the pacifist view. Afraid of offending opinion by using force in America's interest, he called off U.S. air support and condemned the invaders to defeat. Of 1300 Cuban refugee invaders, Castro captured or killed 1200.

Remarkably, the American people promptly forgave our government one of the biggest blunders in American history. But people may find it a little harder to forgive what we have done since the Bay of Pigs disaster--which has been, very little. Our propaganda broadcasts from Swan Island have alienated Cubans rather than enlisted their support. We seem to have given little help or encouragement to those who want to resist. This is a pity because disaffection and misery in Cuba deepened drastically last summer, and guidance and help might have turned it to account.

Daily Telegraph Correspondent Edwin Tetlow tells Don Dixon about the situation there today:

MR. TETLOW: Well, I think this last visit has proved one thing, which I never dreamt of in 1959, when I was there when Castro went in. I think I've seen the Revolution go the full circle, and become completely lost and dissipated! I think Castro has lost all control of it now. As a matter of fact, one of the things said and put very nicely by one of the diplomats in Havana, he said: "Fidel Castro must be a very confused man now. His revolution has got away from him." And by that he meant that when Castro went in--in the first place--he had the good will of the whole of the Cubans--95 - 96% of them were with him and everything looked very promising. And step by step since then, he's gradually lost support and the Revolution has lost steam. And the one crucial thing was when the Communists took over about 18 months ago, and now, it's perfectly apparent to me that the one who is calling the tune is Mr. Krushchev--by remote control from the Kremlin.

MR. SMITH: The morale of the anti-Castro refugees, high before, was shattered by the Bay of Pigs debacle. Some like the anti-Castro rebels shown in this film never seen publicly before, tried to continue training. They even carried out raids on Cuban islands for awhile. But finally they had to give up due to lack of funds and to discouragement by the CIA. Cuban Cameraman Laureano Batista tells of a raid carried out by these rebels.

MR. BATISTA: In this instance, there were 19 men that we were to land. The full expedition, four boats plus their crews, were a complement of 42 men. They left the main boats at four o'clock in the afternoon proceeding slowly so that they would be at nightfall about 25 miles off the coast, and everything proceeded according to schedule.

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MR. SMITH: Inside Cuba, itself, without encouragement or help, desperate Cubans have taken to the mountains to war against Castro. French photographer, Charles Bonnay, recently made his way to them and took these photographs. These forces are not strong. But with help and encouragement could be made so and would attract substantial reinforcements from the Cuban population.

This past summer, Castro invited the Russians virtually to take over, the economic situation and the collapse of morale had become so bad. A thousand civilian Soviet technicians direct Cuban economy. Four to five thousand Soviet military technicians have moved in to create within Castro's low morale militia a strong new efficient core, a kind of Praetorian guard to resist both refugee raids from outside and uprisings within.

Senator Hugh Scott, Republican, Pennsylvania, says the new situation constitutes a clear and present danger requiring immediate action:

SEN. SCOTT: Its present danger consists of the fact that it is actively preparing missile sites, supposedly of limited range: that these missile sites can very readily be constructed into a range that could reach far inland and thereby move the Russian menace all the way from Moscow to Havana. Further power they have is that they are piling up all kinds of weapons which can be used to smuggle into other Latin countries, and in so doing the so-called faulty description of them as defensive could be revealed to be very offensive indeed. Moreover, if Cuba continues to build up with Soviet force and power the means for warfare, we are gradually going to lose the Central American republics and we're going to lose the South American republics.

MR. SMITH: Three courses of action have been proposed. In Miami, Umberto Medrano, former editor of the Cuban paper Prensa Libre, advocates the most extreme course:

MR. MEDRANO: I think the United States must invade Cuba but of course with we Cuban exiles in the first firing line in the front. It is not only a matter of prestige but it is a matter of the security of the whole hemisphere which of course involves the security of the United States.

MR. SMITH: Senator Scott believes in blockading Cuba instead:

SEN. SCOTT: Well, I have spoken of blockade. I think it has been somewhat misinterpreted, because I said that ultimately a blockade is a very risky thing. That must be admitted. But I take the position that the first step should be by search and seizure, which many governments have taken without getting into war; that, we go aboard, we find cargo which we declare to be contraband in our eyes; we dump the war material overboard, and we send the Russians troops home. I know people are going to say, "What are the

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Russians going to be doing when we do that?" That is part of the blockade. Following that, we can actually use naval vessels to enforce a blockade.

The answer that I see is that Cuba is not essential to Krushchev's policy. But it is essential to our survival that we keep a Soviet government from menacing Cape Canaveral and the rest of the United States. Therefore, I do not think Krushchev would take war-like moves, if we are strong. The proof of that is, he never has.

MR. SMITH: The most moderate advice--simply to give more moral and material help to guerrillas inside Cuba--comes from the most revolutionary spokesman, Dr. Raul Chibas:

DR. CHIBAS: I'm sure that the Cuban people are against him --the majority are against this disillusion. They are against Fidel Castro. Only, we have to give them the means! We've got to show them the way to throw the regime, the Communist regime that they have now--that's not the regime they wanted. And what they say: he has half a million militia armed. Well, those militia men are part of the people. The only thing you have to win them over.

MR. SMITH: The best known anti-Castro rebel leader is Manuel Rey, once Castro's Minister of Public Works. Interviewed in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Rey says--don't send Americans; just help Cubans:

MR. REY: They should help the freedom fighters inside Cuba with honesty--no strings attached, giving them the courage and moral backing they need. They are fighting for Cuba, and they are fighting for the free world. In this way, we are sure the United States will be winning friends inside Cuba, and we will also be winning free relations for the whole continent in the near future.

MR. SMITH: The only thing all agree on--there must be action involving the U. S. soon. British Reporter Tetlow:

MR. TETLOW: It was quite apparent to me while I was there, that the Cuban Communists and the Russians are determinedly setting up a base there. And, I should say, judging what they've done in other parts of the world around and I have had some contact with them, that once they've consolidated that, they will make it an outpost for spreading the Confederation out in the Caribbean. I would say...that this process will go on just as fast, and as far as the United States will allow it. Some means, if it is to be overthrown, some means will have to be found of doing it from without, and it is up to the United States to decide and find out what is the best means of doing that.

MR. SMITH: In a moment, the man in charge of the problem--the Secretary of State of the United States. But first, this word from Nationwide Insurance and Ted Baughan.

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MR. SMITH: Secretary of State Rusk is most directly concerned with Cuba. ABC News diplomatic correspondent John Scali asked whether Castro could not turn his so-called defensive weapons into offensive uses:

SEC. RUSK: I don't think that we ought to play with words on this question of defensive and offensive weapons. Any weapon is offensive if you are on the wrong end of it. But the configuration of the military forces in Cuba is a configuration of defensive capability. What we are concerned about is the development of any significant offensive capability against Cuba's neighbors in the Caribbean or against this country and we are keeping a very close watch indeed on just that point. We have very great power in that area and the President has made it very clear that whatever arms are in Cuba will stay in Cuba and that there will be no effort by Castro to move these arms into other countries.

MR. SCALI: How would you evaluate the Soviet arms build-up in Cuba in terms of the total Soviet cold war strategy?

SEC. RUSK: Oh, I think that the Soviets have had to face the fact that this regime in Cuba has been getting into very serious trouble indeed on the Island. Foodstuffs are in very short supply, production has dropped off severely, there has been undoubtedly a sense of uneasiness and alarm on the part of the rulers there. They have called, for example, for a considerable number of what seemed to us to be phony alerts. I think they may be trying to draw attention away from some of the problems that they are having on the Island. I think that the Cuban situation is certainly becoming very expensive indeed for the bloc to shore-up the failures there; but it is also a very serious problem for us and has to be treated as such.

MR. SCALI: Mr. Secretary, which is the greatest risk; the potential alienating of much of the world opinion by taking firm action against Cuba, or the potential loss of prestige and respect for permitting Russia to outflank us.

SEC. RUSK: Well, I think neither one of those is a full basis for deciding what action is right and wise and necessary in a given situation. It is clear that the power of the United States is such that you could put armed forces ashore in Cuba but that means a lot of casualties and it means a lot of Cuban casualties, it means bloodshed. And if we could find an answer without that, we should try to do so.

MR. SCALI: Mr. Secretary, do you think it's possible to shut down some of our bases overseas in return for which Russia would close down her base in Cuba?

SEC. RUSK: This is not a negotiable point. This would not be a way to meet the struggle for freedom. You cannot support freedom in one place by surrendering freedom in another. In any event,

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we have special commitments here in this Hemisphere under our Hemisphere charters, and we cannot connect in negotiations or in trades the problem of Cuba with the defense of freedom in other places. No. This is not on.

MR. SCALI: This would also apply then to any effort to link Cuba, say, with Berlin?

SEC. RUSK: Exactly.

MR. SMITH: My completely personal view is that Castro's Cuba has become a threat to US Security--a more important threat than the Communist invasion of South Korea was. We need not speculate about what Castro and Khrushchev intend for us. We can take their oft-expressed public word for it that they think themselves the wave of the future and must spread their sway over Latin America and bury us.

I think Castro's satellite government has to be removed. Cuban patriots, aided by us, should do it. But if Russian guns have made that too difficult, direct American action should be contemplated.

If world opinion is offended, it is deeply to be regretted; but we must -- as Mr. Truman did in Korea -- do what is right, not what is pleasing.

Some argue that if we have a base in Turkey, Russia is entitled to one in Cuba. That is nonsense. Power politics is not played by the rules of chivalry. If it were we would have won the Cold War long ago.

If, as some fear, Khrushchev would retaliate against some friend of ours, Berlin or Turkey, then nothing is changed: that means war now as it always has. We should make that crystal clear.

We can tell our Latin neighbors that we consider them free to choose any government they wish. America has supported even Communist governments like Tito's. But we cannot prudently permit the establishment nearby of a foreign power frankly devoted to the subjugation of all of us.

For us, this is a little like watching Hitler's march into the Rhineland. He could have been stopped easily then. But by not acting then his opponents made a bloody World War inevitable.

Good Night.